



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Redevelopment Agency

Community and Economic Development

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### **North Park Theatre Re-Opens Its Doors**

*City and Partners Restore Historic Building into State-of-the-Art Live Performance Venue*

**SAN DIEGO** – The North Park community today gathered to celebrate the return of a City landmark with the official opening of the Stephen and Mary Birch North Park Theatre. A cornerstone in the community since 1929, the North Park Theatre is once again a thriving live performance venue for the neighborhood and the San Diego region.

Deputy Mayor Toni Atkins hailed the opening of the North Park Theatre as the culmination of many years of hard work from the public and private sectors and the community as a whole.

“I don’t think I am exaggerating to say that this theater will be the most important catalyst for the revitalization of North Park that has happened in our time. This will be the heart of the North Park Arts, Culture and Entertainment District, which seems more vibrant every day,” said deputy mayor Atkins, whose council district includes North Park. “I am so pleased to be a part of this historic day and look forward to enjoying live performances in this beautifully restored theatre.”

The City of San Diego has been invested in the restoration of the theatre for fifteen years. The City purchased the theatre in 1990 to ensure preservation of the historic landmark, and the City’s Redevelopment Agency spearheaded the theatre’s refurbishment, investing \$22 million in funding for restoration and a 393-space parking structure to accommodate increased traffic around the theatre.

The Agency negotiated the agreement with developer Arnold G. “Bud” Fischer, operating under the name North Park Theatre, LLC, who brought more than 30 years of experience in rehabilitating historic buildings. Renovations included remodeling the 750-seat theater, constructing a new theatre entrance and marquee, and adding interior improvements such as air conditioning, heating, and lighting. The North Park Theatre is the only theatre of its size in San Diego to feature a proscenium arch stage, full-sized orchestra pit and fly-loft above the stage. The theatre also features 5,800 square feet of retail space on the ground floor and 6,700 square feet of office space on the second floor.

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Lyric Opera San Diego was selected by Fischer to serve as the theatre's managing tenant. The company, founded in 1979, performs operas and musicals from the European and American tradition, in English, presenting performances with full orchestra and chorus accompaniment. The company will rent the theatre to other performing arts groups, schools and organizations at reasonable rates during times when Lyric Opera is not performing. The first live performance at the theatre is on October 14, 2005.

"The restoration of the North Park Theatre is a vital component in the revitalization of the North Park neighborhood," said Debra Fischle-Faulk, assistant executive director of the City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency. "It's satisfying to help save an historic structure that means so much to this neighborhood and the San Diego community. Without the combination of support from the community, an experienced developer and operator and the tool of redevelopment, it's unlikely the theatre would have been restored and available for all to enjoy today."

Originally a single screen motion picture theatre that accommodated approximately 1,200 seats, the North Park Theatre was once one of the most profitable of the Fox West Coast movie theatre chain. In 1975, when the commercial use of the theatre was discontinued, the Horizon Christian Fellowship Church occupied the property until 1986. It was deemed unsafe in 1989 and had stood vacant for years until a grassroots effort formed to save and restore the theatre.

For more information on performances and theatre tickets, contact the **Lyric Opera** box office at (619) 239-8836 or visit [www.northparktheatre.com](http://www.northparktheatre.com).

For more information on this and other redevelopment projects, contact the **City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency** at (619) 533-4233 or visit the City's web site at [www.sandiego.gov/redevelopment-agency](http://www.sandiego.gov/redevelopment-agency).

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*The City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency eliminates blight from designated areas, as well as achieves the goals of development, reconstruction and rehabilitation of residential, commercial, industrial, and retail districts. Redevelopment is one of the most effective ways to breathe new life into deteriorated areas plagued by social, physical, environmental or economic conditions that act as a barrier to new investment by private enterprise. **The City of San Diego Redevelopment Agency consists of three divisions:** the City Redevelopment Division (which provides overall agency management and is housed in the City of San Diego Community and Economic Development Department), the Centre City Development Corporation and the Southeastern Economic Development Corporation.*